



HISTORICAL COMMISSION MINUTES

7:00 p.m., May 29, 2002
City Council Meeting Chambers
One North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, California 94022

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Foerster; Vice-Chair Carpenter; Commissioners Hull, Humphries, McChesney McDonald, and Sandoval. Absent: None

MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of the April 22, 2002 meeting, was moved by Commissioner Hull, and seconded by Commissioner Sandoval. Passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Members of the audience may bring to the attention of the commission any item that is not on the agenda. Speakers are given up to three (3) minutes. State law prohibits the Commission from acting on items that do not appear on the agenda.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Chairperson's report: A discussion on the City's and the Commission's landmark creation process took place. One idea is to request an earlier study session with Council, earlier than the traditional first week in December. An alternative would be to write a memo and Council Report about properties that are currently City landmarks and properties that are not yet in a landmark status but could be, particularly those with a high ranking—perhaps, ranked 90 and above.

Landmark properties—Standards: The sub-committee currently consists of Commissioners Hull, Sandoval, and McChesney. Chair Foerster will act as an alternate to the committee, if one of the members can't attend a sub-committee meeting. The inventory needs to remain credible and a documentation process for reviewing it needs to be created. Discussion of the idea that "in the 90's ranking could lead to landmark status; in the '80's ranking means high historical importance; and that an "in the '70's ranking means high historical significance"—followed by discussion on the existing obligation to review remodeling plans for properties in

the 60 and above ranking. Sandoval may discuss the last item with former Commissioner Aced. (More to follow on the discussion.) Goal of a report to Council in September to be reviewed at June and July meetings versus idea of requesting an early Joint Study Session date.

General Plan-Policy 6.2: After a discussion, Vice-Chair Carpenter moved that the general plan include landmark, historically significant and historically important properties—following the categories in the Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) and that the Historical Commission’s obligation for review would include these three categories for any properties ranked 70 and above on the HRI. Initial motion seconded by Commissioner McChesney. After a discussion the motion was amended that the general plan language would include the Historical Commission’s obligation for review on any property that ranks 60 and above on the HRI and to include the categories of landmark, historically significant and historically important properties. (This follows the current written practice between the Planning staff and the Historical Commission that any application for remodeling, demolition, etc. adopted in a memo written in 1998 by Commissioner Aced.) There was a productive discussion during both opportunities to amend. Amended motion seconded by McChesney. The motion passed by 6, with one abstention. The suggested policy from Planning staff read “The City shall regard demolition of historic resources as a last resort, to be permitted only after the City determines that the resource retains no reasonable economic use, that demolition is necessary to protect health, safety, and welfare, or that demolition is necessary to proceed with a new project where the benefits of the new project outweigh the loss of the historic resources.” Chair Foerster will send a memo to the Director of the Community Development Department with a copy to the staff liaison for the Commission.

Commissioner Reports:

1. Essay Contest 2003 – Commissioner McDonald (a member of the museum’s Education Committee) will accompany Commissioner Humphries to the Ed. Committee Meeting on June 12 to introduce her and to help with the discussion about finding a topic for the 2003 Essay Contest that will support the City’s 50th Anniversary of Incorporation theme and events; yet be comfortable with the curriculum goals of the third through sixth grades. McDonald will circulate to the Commission a list of past Essay Contest topics with the years that they were used. Themes such as “Change over Fifty Years,” and “Main Street 50 Years Ago,” were informally brainstormed.
2. Commissioners Hull and Humphries reported on preservation resources (books, etc.) that may be placed at the Library and the museum; and about a Certificate of Recognition for Historic Property Owners—suitable for framing and display—that can be given out in recognition of the 50th Anniversary of Incorporation year. More information at next meeting.
3. Vice-Chair Carpenter and Commissioner McDonald spoke briefly about the progress of the “Los Altos: Celebrating 50 Years of Community,” exhibit and some related activities that will be taking place on Thursday, August 22, 5 to 7 pm, the opening reception for the exhibit at the museum and the City-wide Picnic/BBQ at the Civic Center between 11 am and 3 pm on Sunday, August

25. The exhibit committee is working well. Some temporal educational programs have been scheduled such as a recreation of the "Incorporation Debate" on September 22. Also, the exhibit overlaps with the Santa Clara County Heritage Council's "History Month: Discover the Past!" group marketing effort so that should enhance community awareness of the museum and the exhibit.

HISTORY MUSEUM REPORT/STAFF REPORT

The Chair gave the staff liaison some credit for working with him on the idea of the Commission making a report to the Museum Association's Annual Meeting (June 17). The Chair and Commissioner Hull will offer a brief version of the Neighborhood Meeting presentation, so that museum board, volunteers and leaders are up to date on the Historic Resources Inventory and the Commission's mission and charge from Council.

OTHER MATTERS/NEW BUSINESS/WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE:

Commissioner McDonald reported on the Barron Park Historical Society meeting at Mitchell Park and information on El Camino Real that is also relevant to the history and future of Los Altos.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McChesney moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Hull. The Commission adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Madelyn Crawford, History Museum Director, Liaison to the Historical Commission, 650-948-9427 X10, e-mail: madelyn.crawford@ci.los-altos.ca.us; fax: 650/559-0268